

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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R 261110Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9278

INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

USNMR SHAPE

CINCUSAFE

CINCUSNAVEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 4031

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MARR, SP

SUBJ: REMOVAL OF CHIEF OF HIGH GENERAL STAFF

REF: MADRID 3800 AND MADRID 3650

1. WE HAVE PIECED TOGETHER FOLLOWING EXPLANATION OF GENERAL DIEZ-ALEGRIA'S SUDDEN DISMISSAL AS CHIEF OF SPANISH HIGH GENERAL STAFF FROM VARIETY OF EMBASSY CONTACTS, INCLUDING COMMENTS BY VERY HIGH LEVEL OFFICIALS TO AMBASSADOR.

2. DIEZ-ALEGRIA HAD BEEN VIEWED WITH SOME DISLIKE AND SUSPICION BY NUMBER OF SENIOR ARMY GENERALS BECAUSE OF HIS "SOFTNESS." THIS IN PART REFLECTS DIEZ-ALEGRIA'S DECISION TO AVOID HARSH MEASURES AFTER ASSASSINATION OF CARRERO-BLANCO LAST DECEMBER, HIS SUPPORT OF MORE HUMANE TREATMENT OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS, AND FACT THAT HE ASCENDED TO TOP RANKS AS STAFF OFFICER RATHER THAN FIELD COMMANDER
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AND HAS CONVEYED PUBLIC IMPRESSION AS BROAD-GUAGED,

LIBERAL FIGURE OF SOME LITERARY DISTINCTION IN CONTRAST WITH NORMAL CHARACTERISTICS EXPECTED OF TOUGH, CONSERVATIVE SPANISH ARMY COMMANDER. HE ALSO MAY HAVE INCURRED DISPLEASURE HIGH OFFICIALS BECAUSE HE SEEMED TO BE BECOMING TOO MUCH OF POLITICAL FIGURE. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSED ORGANIC DEFENSE LAW TO CORTES BY HIGH GENERAL STAFF FINALLY TRIGGERED ACTION AGAINST HIM BY THREE SERVICE MINISTERS THEMSELVES WHO COMPLAINED TO PRESIDENT ARIAS. THREE MINISTERS, WHO FEARED LAW WOULD CURTAIL INDIVIDUAL AUTHORITY, THREATENED TO GO DIRECTLY TO FRANCO THEMSELVES IF ARIAS REFUSED TO DO SO.

3. IN MEANTIME, DIEZ-ALEGRIA INCURRED FRANCO'S DISPLEASURE BY HAVING LUNCH WITH PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU, WITH WHOM HE WAS PHOTOGRAPHED, DURING RECENT VISIT TO ROMANIA. FRANCO TERMED THIS A "BLUNDER" (DESACIERTO). ANOTHER EMBASSY SOURCE SAID DIEZ-ALEGRIA'S MISTAKE HERE WAS USE OF UNIFORM IN ROMANIA, SINCE HE SUPPOSEDLY VISITING IN QUASI-PRIVATE CAPACITY AS MEMBER OF SPANISH ACADEMY OF MORAL SCIENCES. GOS LEADERS ALSO PROFESSED TO HAVE INFORMATION THAT WHILE IN BUCHAREST DIEZ-ALEGRIA HAD CONTACTED EITHER SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER SANTIAGO CARRILLO OR HIS EMISSARIES, BUT THIS IS IMPHATICALLY DENIED BY A HIGH SOURCE.

4. DECISION TO REPLACE HIM FOLLOWED ROMANIAN VISIT JUNE 1 AND 2, BUT BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR VISIT TO TUNIS ON JUNE 7, ALTHOUGH DIEZ-ALEGRIA NOT INFORMED OF DECISION UNTIL RETURN JUNE 13. ALTHOUGH DIEZ-ALEGRIA APPARENTLY CONSIDERED RELINQUISHING POST IN FUTURE AND GENERAL FERNANDEZ VW LESPIN HAS INDICATED HE WAS EXPECTING APPOINTMENT AS REPLACEMENT, SUDDENNESS OF CHANGE WAS NEVERTHELESS SURPRISE TO ALL.

5. IN VALEDICTORY ADDRESS TO HIS STAFF JUNE 17, DIEZ-ALEGRIA PROCLAIMED LOYALTY TO MEMORY OF HIS FORMER SUPERIORS, ONE-TIME VICE PRESIDENT AND HIGH GENERAL STAFF CHIEF AGUSTIN MUNOZ GRANDES AND FORMER VICE PRESIDENT LUIS CARRERO BLANCO. HE AFFIRMED HE WAS LEAVING POST WITH "PURE HEART AND TRANQUIL CONSCIENCE." HE APPEALED TO FOLLOWERS TO BE LOYAL TO CHIEF OF STATE AND PRINCE
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AND "TO TAKE SPECIAL CARE TO MAINTAIN MONOLITHIC UNITY OF ARMED FORCES." APPEALING FOR LOYALTY, WHICH HE NOTED IS "TWO-WAY VIRTUE BETWEEN SUPERIOR AND SUBORDINATE," HE WARNED AGAINST HARBORING ENVY, RANCOR, OR "ILLEGITIMATE INTERESTS."

6. FAREWELL CEREMONY WAS LARGELY IGNORED BY SENIOR SPANISH MILITARY OFFICIALS, MOST OF WHOM, ALONG WITH PRINCE JUAN CARLOS, WERE ATTENDING SIMULTANEOOUS AWARDS CEREMONY FOR MUCH LOWER-RANKING AIR FORCE OFFICER. PRESS

COVERAGE OF FAREWELL CEREMONY WAS MINIMAL AND VALEDICTORY
ADDRESS NOT PUBLISHED, REPORTEDLY AT BEHEST OF GOVERNMENT.
SUBDUED NATURE OF DEPARTURE HELPED STIMULATE UNFOUNDED
RUMORS THAT DIEZ-ALEGRIA HAD BEEN BLOCKED IN EFFORT TO
TAKE CASE TO PUBLIC AND WAS UNDER VIRTUAL HOUSE ARREST.
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